The Naked Mole-Rat Letters
Mary Amato

When her father begins a long-distance romance with a Washington, D.C., zookeeper, twelve-year-old Frankie sends fabricated e-mail letters to the zookeeper in an attempt to end the relationship in this story about family, friendship, and growing up.

MARK TWAIN AWARD MASTER LIST
SEQUOYAH CHILDREN’S BOOK AWARD MASTER LIST
VOLUNTEER STATE BOOK AWARD MASTER LIST (Gr. 6-8)
WILLIAM ALLEN WHITE CHILDREN’S BOOK AWARD MASTER LIST (Gr. 6-8)

ASK THE AUTHOR—The Inside Scoop

How much of the book is based on your personal experience?

Although I based the book on my experience of reading my father’s secret love letters to the woman who eventually became my stepmother, Frankie Wallop is not me. A work of fiction is made up of bits and pieces of an author’s world, but it is a new invention. Here are some of the ways Frankie and I are different and some of the things we share in common:

- I play the dulcimer now. But I didn’t grow up playing the dulcimer like Frankie.
- I am the baby of four girls whereas Frankie is the oldest and has two brothers.
- My father’s secret love was a kindergarten teacher, not a zookeeper.
- I have kept a journal since the age of seven. Writing in my diary was an important way for me to express my feelings.
- I had two cooking fires in my house, but nothing was destroyed.
- Like Frankie, I auditioned for The Miracle Worker. I wanted to play Helen and didn’t make it. My interest in Helen Keller came much earlier than Frankie’s. We had a family friend who was blind. I learned Braille from her when I was in the second grade.
- I grew up in Illinois, not Indiana. But I did go to college in Bloomington, Indiana.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- Sometimes Frankie tells lies. In what other ways is she dishonest? In what ways is she honest?
- Talk about other characters in the book and in what ways they are either honest or dishonest.
- When does Frankie begin to like Ayanna? Why?
- Ayanna teaches Frankie about the behavior of naked mole-rats. What else does she teach Frankie?
- How does her father change? What forces him to change?

SPRINGBOARDS FOR YOUR OWN WRITING

- Write a story about a lie that gets your main character in trouble.
- Create two characters who have a hard time communicating with each other in person. Write a story that is entirely made up of letters that they write to each other. (Note: A story that is told in the form of letters is called an epistolary novel.)
This quiz is about the book “The Naked Mole-Rat Letters” by Mary Amato. It is a really good book. Enjoy! Average score for this quiz is 6 / 10. Difficulty: Average. Played 186 times. As of Jul 30 19. Read “The Naked Mole-Rat Letters” by Mary Amato available from Rakuten Kobo. Sign up today and get $5 off your first purchase. When her father begins a long-distance romance with a Washington, D.C. zookeeper, twelve-year-old Frankie sends fabricated email letters to the zookeeper in an attempt to end the relationship, in this story about family, friendship, and growing up. Buy the eBook. Price